CITY OF SANTA MARIA
SPECIAL JOINT MEETING
CITY COUNCIL/PLANNING COMMISSION

APRIL 7, 2005

CALL TO ORDER:
Mayor Lavagnino called the Special Joint City Council/Planning Commission meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. at the Abel Maldonado Community Youth Center, 600 S. McClelland Street, Santa Maria, CA.

ROLL CALL:

CITY COUNCIL
Councilmembers Mariscal, Orach, Patino, Trujillo, and Mayor Lavagnino were present.

PLANNING COMMISSION
Commissioners Brown, Everett, Hunter and Chairperson Waterfield were present.

Commissioner Benedetti was absent.

OTHERS CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT
City Manager Ness, Assistant City Manager Haydon, City Attorney Trujillo, Director of Community Development Lindsey, Director of Public Works Karp, Director of Recreation and Parks Posada, Fire Chief Ortiz, Transit Manager Rye, Planning Division Manager Bierdzinski, Planner III Shipsey, Planner II Gee, Planner II Kimball, Planner II Karaboghosian, Code Compliance Board Member Stewart, Code Compliance Board Member Fletcher, and Code Compliance Board member Ferrari.

PUBLIC COMMENT
There was no public comment at this time.

BUS TOUR
At 8:15 a.m., Mayor Lavagnino continued the meeting with a bus tour of the City.

The bus tour ended at the Abel Maldonado Community Youth Center at 12:00 p.m. At that time, Mayor Lavagnino continued the meeting to 6:30 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers.

RECONVENE
Mayor Lavagnino reconvened the Special Joint Meeting of the City Council/Planning Commission at 6:30 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers.

FLAG SALUTE
Councilmember Mariscal led the pledge of allegiance.

ROLL CALL:

CITY COUNCIL
Councilmembers Mariscal, Orach, Patino, Trujillo, and Mayor Lavagnino were present.

PLANNING COMMISSION
Commissioners Benedetti, Brown, Everett, Hunter, and Chairperson Waterfield were present.

OTHERS PRESENT
City Manager Ness, Assistant City Manager Haydon, City Attorney Trujillo, Police Commander Mawhinney, Director of Community Development Lindsey, Director of Public Works Karp, City Engineer Sweet, Planning Division Manager Bierdzinski, Planner III Shipsey, Planner II Gee, Planner II Kimball, Planner II Karaboghosian, and Chief Deputy City Clerk Perez.

PUBLIC COMMENT
There was none at this time.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS
Director of Community Development Lindsey gave an overview of the topics for discussion which included Downtown Specific Plan issues, the need for industrial development sites, and residential issues including density, lot widths, and site design. He introduced Eric Jestesen and Debbie Rudd from RRM Design Group, the City's Downtown Specific Plan consultants.

1. Downtown Specific Plan Issues:

Eric Jestesen and Debbie Rudd gave an overview of the Downtown Specific Plan. They explained that the three issues they were seeking direction on from the Council and Commission were vision, circulation and incentives. They explained the time table for the Specific Plan approval process and outlined the various districts being proposed for the downtown corridor. The vision is for a place where people would want to come and congregate, leave their cars and walk, and where there would be an identifiable downtown area. Ways to achieve that vision could include new design guidelines, new development standards, massing and height allowances, and public improvements. Changes in circulation in the downtown area could include making the area more pedestrian friendly by slowing traffic, narrowing and/or removing driving lanes, corner bulb-outs, wider sidewalks, enhanced crosswalks, and pedestrian bridge construction. One proposal is to have a mid-block crossing with a traffic signal between Main Street and Cook Street on Broadway to allow people to move more easily between Town Center East and Town Center West. Another topic for discussion would be taking over control of the right-of-way from Caltrans along a portion of Main Street and Broadway to give the City more flexibility in design. Rerouting large trucks off of Main Street could also help promote a more pedestrian friendly downtown. Possible incentives for implementation of the plan would be relaxing parking requirements for the downtown core; establishing a Business Improvement District; waiving or reducing fees for development; setting aside a percentage of Transient Occupancy Tax for downtown activities; expediting processing of applications; giving height, setback, density and parking incentives; or granting business tax waivers.

Planning Commissioner Benedetti stated he would like to see an easy way for people to get from the new transit center to the library and the downtown area.

Councilmember Mariscal stated he did not know that acquiring control of all of Broadway and/or Main Street would be desirable to the City and asked if there had been any discussion with Caltrans regarding the City taking over a portion.

Mr. Jestesen said he had not broached that subject with Caltrans, but he would be willing to open that discussion if the Council wanted to pursue it.

Councilmember Patino asked about truck traffic if the lanes were narrowed. She indicated there were a lot of trucks that used Main Street.

Mr. Jestesen said they were looking at rerouting trucks further south and would include that in the Specific Plan. They had a truck study and analysis done, and they did a lot of outreach with the agricultural community. The narrowed lanes would still be able to accommodate trucks on Main Street and Broadway.

Councilmember Orach suggested they consider some type of trolley system or transportation to move people easily from the Transit Center to the mall or the library. He said he liked the idea of a street level crossing mid-block on Broadway at the mall.

Planning Commissioner Hunter said she thought it was an exciting plan. She would like to see the Commission and Council focus on incentives possibly with sunset clauses to reward the private sector businesses who are willing to jump in early and help get the plan started.

Councilmember Trujillo indicated he was very familiar with Santa Fe. He would like to see more study on incentives and look at how a City like Santa Fe gets three to four million tourists a year. The City needs to find out how they got the merchants and private sector involved.

Planning Commissioner Everett stated Santa Barbara does an excellent job of maintaining their street furniture downtown, but Ventura's look ragged and worn. He would like to see the City implement a process where it maintains these features so they look good.

Mayor Lavagnino stated some of the slides in their presentation were reminiscent of the Santa Maria he grew up in before all the buildings were torn down to construct the Town Center projects.

Laurie Tamura, representing the Santa Maria Valley Railroad, stated the railroad, which owns a number of properties along the southern boundaries of the Downtown Specific Plan area, started thinking about they wanted to do with their properties about four years ago. They have been discussing the railroad's ideas with RRM and City staff. Incentives are very important. She was excited about the height restrictions being increased to allow three and four story elements. To do that, parking standards would need to be looked at. The railroad also wants to respect the historic uses of the property from what is existing there today and what is planned. The old historic uses and industrial buildings have long-term tenants. They want to make sure those businesses are able to survive during the time the railroad is planning for something else on the property.

Mayor Lavagnino stated he thought the Commission and Council were open to new and innovative ideas to make Santa Maria better.

Laurie Tamura, Urban Planning Concepts, stated when the Recreation and Parks Administration building was moved over near the railroad, one of the discussion items was the number of overhead utility lines going down the alleyway. Undergrounding those utilities needs to be looked at for that area.

Councilmember Mariscal stated he appreciated the statements regarding the Business Improvement District and asked if the City needed to wait for the Downtown Specific Plan to be implemented to move forward with a Business Improvement District.

Director of Community Development Lindsey explained that it takes between two to three years to form a Business Improvement District and really get it running. There are things that need to happen first and part of that is cultivating the local merchants. That would not have to wait for Plan adoption. The City could be networking with the local merchants to see if there was backing for a Business Improvement District.

2. Need for Industrial Development Sites

Director of Community Development Lindsey talked about why industrial uses are important to the City and what would happen if there was no industrial land including a lack of jobs/housing balance, residents would be required to commute to work, community polarization, a reduced sense of community ownership and involvement, fewer hours spent in Santa Maria which means more dollars spent where people work, and empty houses during the day. The benefits of industry are building community wealth through job creation, providing higher income levels, providing a wider range of career options and upward mobility, providing a market base for estate-sized housing through higher paying industrial jobs. Businesses are moving out of California. Many of the City's industrial spaces are being used by churches, gymnasiums, and mini-warehouses and not industrial uses.

Planner III Shipsey gave an overview of what industrial-zoned land was in the City. Six percent of the City is the airport, 22 percent of the City is industrial with 10 percent of that industrial being vacant. 50 percent of that vacant industrial land is in the CM/AG or Airport zoning districts.

Director Lindsey continued with a breakdown of employment in the City by types of business with the service sector being the largest at 39 percent, 22 percent in agriculture and oil, and 12 percent in retail trade.

Mayor Lavagnino asked if it was staff's opinion that the City had enough industrial zoned property or was more needed.

Director Lindsey replied there were three dependent variables: workers, jobs, and housing. When Santa Maria is compared with the South Coast, it shows that Santa Maria is providing the lion's share of housing. When workers are compared to jobs, it is the South Coast that has more jobs than workers while Santa Maria has more workers than jobs. Workers from Santa Maria are commuting to the South Coast, including Santa Barbara, for jobs. It is likely to get worse instead of better.

Councilmember Mariscal asked how many of those commuters were actually commuting to industrial based jobs rather than engineering or professional type jobs.

Director Lindsey explained that when he talked about industry, he was also talking about very clean research and development types of industry, engineering, aerospace engineering, etc. What was not included was the service or retail type jobs.

Councilmember Patino asked how many of the commuters worked at Vandenberg Air Force Base.

Director Lindsey replied he did not have that information. Santa Maria is providing housing for people who work elsewhere. One of the trends the City is seeing is a demand for smaller industrial lease spaces.

Councilmember Orach asked about the Depot Street corridor where there were old industrial buildings. That area is close to downtown and housing. He asked if staff had looked at incentives for converting or redeveloping some of these existing industrial buildings.

Planner III Shipsey stated trying to match businesses with a site happened on a case-by-case basis. Their focus would be to identify vacant buildings first. Most businesses that are looking to relocate want to get in and operating as quickly as possible.

Director Lindsey talked about Sphere Area 9 which consisted of 884 acres but was constrained by agricultural overlays on 421 acres and 152 acres of agricultural and conservation open space. Additionally, it is constrained by the airport approach limiting the amount of land available for industrial development. He talked about the trend to rezone industrial properties. By the year 2013, following those trends, there would be no vacant industrial property available. He also discussed some policy choices that the City would need to make in the future to provide more industrial property and land uses.

Planning Commissioner Hunter commented that she thought it was important to preserve the industrial land and felt the City needed to look at the size of parcels. The City should be encouraging some smaller lots for industrial development so local businesses could grow and expand, and to attract smaller businesses who might want to relocate to Santa Maria. The City should be looking at what it can do to help local businesses expand to provide more jobs.

Councilmember Trujillo stated he would like to see the City try to attract businesses like soft-ware development companies, health facilities, billing centers, credit data centers, financial centers, distribution centers, research and development businesses, movie production, and other clean industries.

Planning Commission Chairperson Waterfield stated there was another really important element the City was missing and that was keeping an eye on State legislation and what was happening to kill businesses in California. According to the Vice President of

the California Chamber of Commerce, there are 2,700 bills in the process that would hurt California businesses.

Laurie Tamura talked about Sphere Area 9. The City has rippened to where that area is ready for an industrial park or industrial master planned area. As the City has been building homes, it has also been building industrial buildings to keep that job/housing balance. There is a great opportunity for the City to work with those landowners to develop Sphere Area 9.

3.

Planner III Shipsey talked about the growth of the City between 1900 and 2000. The average number of residential building permits issued each year is just under 500. Total building permits is just over 1,300. In 2003 and 2004, Santa Maria issued 57 percent of the residential building permits in Santa Barbara County with only 20 percent of the population. The City has noticed an increase in code compliance complaints related to substandard living conditions, building or remodeling done without permits, parking in front yard setbacks, conversion of covered parking, and conversion of spaces into dwelling units. He talked about a study he had completed at the request of the Planning Commission comparing standard and small lot subdivisions and highlighted the differences in setbacks, housing sizes, and garage locations. The issue is single-family density vs. intensity. Since the year 2000, the average single family house was 1,950 square feet while 25 years ago the houses were smaller and the lots were much larger. Land prices and housing costs will continue to rise; and even with two good jobs, the single-family detached house will be unaffordable for most first-time home buyers. The City is running out of residential land as well. At 500 new units per year, the City will be out of residential land in 12 years. He pointed out areas further outside the City limits that could be annexed into the City in the future for residential and industrial uses.

Planning Commissioner Brown stated he had some concerns with residential design and density. The Planning Commission had not approved any developments with lots over 5,000 square feet for the past four years. Several projects were approved with lots ranging from 2,500 to 3,000 square feet. He suggested looking at a different configuration of the lots, such as 60 feet by 90 feet for more width so the houses could be spread out. All the streets run parallel to each other. Smaller lots do not lead to lower prices. Many of the projects look very nice now, but he was concerned about what would they look like 10 years from now.

Director Lindsey stated if the City were to pursue wider lots, there would be a trade-off. You would have a more attractive looking subdivision from the street side but with a much smaller rear yard.

Planning Commissioner Brown commented that if that wasn't an acceptable trade-off, the City should be looking at larger lots.

Mayor Lavagnino stated if the City wanted to attract executives from large companies, it would have to supply housing that was commensurate with their position. East of Fremont might be an area to look at higher priced housing and larger lots.

Chairperson Waterfield stated she agreed that the City had to move toward larger lots. If the City wanted to attract larger businesses, it would need to put their families in larger homes on larger lots. The Fremont area would be a very good area to have 10,000 square foot lots.

Planning Commissioner Hunter commented that as residents of Santa Maria look for move-up housing, many have left the area for Arroyo Grande and Nipomo to get larger lots and larger homes. If the City is going to plan for all its residents, it needs to address that particular area of housing. She said she was very much in favor of wider lots. She suggested adopting a minimum 60 foot frontage standard so there would be an opportunity for a nice entry, a porch and more interesting designs. There are also too many projects with long, straight streets. More curvilinear streets are needed. She

suggested the City look at incentives for builders to build smaller houses for the younger couples who have no children. She also suggested oversized garages so there would be room for storage and two cars, and on smaller lots there be more of a mix of single story and two story homes. The City also needs to look at multi-family sites and intersperse them throughout the City rather than having large blocks of affordable housing in one area.

Councilmember Mariscal commented that the City did not have a lot of R-3 zoning. Low income housing did not mean that everyone would be able to own a house. Providing the mechanism for lower income housing to be built is the key. Interspersing them throughout the community is the better way to go. When you walk down some of the older streets in Santa Maria you see a mix of single-family and multi-family dwellings on the same block. He agreed that larger lots were needed. He talked about a custom lot development with the lots ranging from 7,500 square feet to 16,000 square feet where the homes were built individually by specific buyers. He asked about the status of the Bradley Ranch annexation.

Director Lindsey stated the Tiger Salamander had been discovered on the Bradley Ranch property, and the Bradley family had decided to pursue resolution of that before moving forward with the annexation.

Councilmember Trujillo stated he would like to see more mixed uses and more executive housing. He would also like to see more cooperation between the City and the Airport District. The City needs to help get more people into the airport.

Michelle Mariscal asked if the City was thinking about providing sites for private sector schools, mainly pre-schools, K through 8, and high school. There are citizens that are looking for other options for their children other than public schools.

Director Lindsey explained that schools were sited in collaboration with the school districts. The City identified areas or regions in the General Plan process where schools might be located. In the Zoning Ordinance it was quite liberal about where schools and institutions could be located for the private sector.

Laurie Tamura talked about the changes in the housing market since 1993 and the need to adjust the rules to meet the market demand. Each of the specific plans designated school sites which set the ground rules for the developers. The City should be talking about what was going to happen 10 years from now.

Randy Alonzo, Inland Pacific Builders, talked about the master plan he was working on for the area east of Fremont Street. He asked for direction from the Commission and Council on what they wanted to see in that area.

Mayor Lavagnino informed him that this was not the appropriate venue to discuss a specific project especially since the property was currently outside the City limits.

Richard Brown, Habitat for Humanity, talked about the generational living style that is occurring in the City where there are several generations living in a home. The City has been persistent in not allowing second units and suggested it be looked at again.

Jeannie Barrett, CRLA, stated the housing that is being built is not for the majority of people who are working in Santa Maria and the local areas. She suggested the City consider doing another development like the Oak Valley subdivision.

Cheryl Flores, People's Self-Help Housing, stated the City needed to keep in mind the variety of people in the community. There are people who need and want the larger lots, but there are also people who need and want smaller lots and smaller houses.
Mike Grogan, Santa Maria Bonita School District, stated the District opened four new schools in the last three and half years, but all of those schools are now at capacity. In the urban core, the District is still having to move a large number of children from the west side of town to the east side of town because of the density on the west side of

town. He asked that the Commission and Council keep that in mind when planning new developments.

Hearing no further comments, Mayor Lavagnino thanked everyone for participating.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the City Council at this time, the meeting was declared adjourned at 9:07 p.m. by order of Mayor Lavagnino.

APPROVED

April 19, 2005
Date

Patricia A. Price
Chief Deputy City Clerk of the City of Santa Maria and ex officio Clerk of the City Council

ATTEST: Patricia A. Price
Chief Deputy City Clerk

Larry Lavagnino
Mayor

Etta Waterfield
Chairperson Waterfield